I: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

6 feet 3 inches (1.90 meters); while for centuries the Seri have been reputed a tribe of giants. 141

The estimation of Seri stature is difficultated by the impossibility of defining maturity; and the effort to determine whether particular individuals were adult brought out clear indications of slowness in reaching complete maturity, i. e., of the continuation of somatic growth throughout an exceptionally long term in proportion to other stages in the life of the individual. Thus, with scarcely an exception, the polygynous matrons were taller than the mean of 5 feet 9 inches, while the apparently adult maidens (with one exception) and the younger wives were below this mean; and in like manner the stature of the warriors varied approximately with appearance of age, all of the younger men falling below the mean, and all of the older (except Machim) rising above it. The difficulty of estimation is further increased by the absence of age records and the impracticability of ascertaining and standardizing the habitually guarded expressions for relative age implied in the kinship terminology; so that the age determinations were roughly relative merely, and there was no means of fixing the absolute age of maturity, of puberty, of marriage, or of the assumption of manhood and womanhood howsoever defined. 141 145

Under the conditions, the determination of stature-range in the Seri rancheria at Costa Rica in 1894 was not only difficult but uncertain; yet in general terms it may be said that the women having two or more children—about twenty in number—were notably uniform in stature, ranging from about 5 feet 7½ inches (in the case of an aged and shrunken elderwoman) to 5 feet 11 inches; that the younger women were more variable; and that the warriors (seventeen in number), of whom only a part were apparently heads of families, were more variable still, though the variation, apart from that apparently correlated with age, was less than is customarily found among the exceptionally uniform Papago, and decidedly less than that seen among the Yaqui or the local Mexicans. 141

The Seri skin-tint is of the usual Amerindian bronze, save that it is exceptionally dark, with a decided tone of black. Essayed representations of the characteristic color appear in plates XVIII and XXIV; but the essays are little more satisfactory than the innumerable attempts at depicting the skin-color of the American aborigines that have gone before. Experienced observers of the native tribes may form an impression of the Seri color from the explanation that they are as much darker than the neighboring Papago as the Papago are darker than the average tribesmen about the Great lakes; the Papago themselves being as much darker than the southern plains or Pueblo folk as these are darker than those of the Lake region. The range in color seems to be slight; the variation among the 60 individuals of both sexes and all ages seen at Costa Rica was hardly perceptible, being less than that usually observed in a single family of any neighboring tribe; while the 142

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

its astounding protective efficiency being attested by the readiness with which the Seri run through cactus thickets so thorny as to stop horses and dogs, or over conglomerated spall-beds so sharp that even the light coyote leaves their trail. In the absence of measurements it may merely be noted that the hands and feet of the Seri are materially larger, not only absolutely but relatively to their stature, than those of neighboring tribesmen or even of Mexican and American workmen. And, on the whole, it may be said that in their proportions, as in their stature and color, the Seri are strikingly uniform, their range being less than that commonly observed in contemporary tribes, and the differences between them and their neighbors much exceeding the range among themselves. 142

Somatically distinctive as is the Seri at rest, he (or she) is much more so in motion—though the characteristics so readily caught by the eye are not easily analyzed and described. Perhaps the most conspicuous element in their walk is a peculiarly quick knee movement, bringing the foot upward and forward at the end of the stride; this merges into an equally quick thrust of the foot forward and downward, with toe well advanced, toward the beginning of the next stride; and these motions combine to produce a singular erectness and steadiness of carriage, the body moving in a nearly direct line with a minimum of lateral swaying or vertical oscillation, while the legs neither drag nor swing, but spurn the ground in successive strokes. Thus the walk seems notably easy and graceful, while the walker carries an air of alertness and reserve power, as if able to stop short at any point of a pace or to bolt forward or backward or sidewise with equal facility; he simulates the "collected" animal whose feet tap the ground lightly and swiftly while his body appears to yield freely to voluntary impulse. In this deer-like or antelope-like movement all the Seri are much alike, and all are decidedly removed from their neighbors, even the light-footed Papago. The component motions are most conspicuous in leisurely walking, though the resultant movement is more striking in rapid walk or the incredibly swift run of youths and adults. The general movement is akin to that shaped by the habit of carrying burdens balanced on the head, as the Seri women actually carry their water ollas for astonishing distances; but the carriage is shared—indeed, best displayed—by the warriors and growing boys, who are not known to carry water in this way. 481 [482]

Among the conspicuous but nondistinctive somatic characters of the Seri is luxuriant straight hair habitually worn long and loose. Commonly the hair is jet-black for most of the length, growing tawny toward the tips; sometimes it is black throughout, while again the tawny tinge, or perhaps a bleached appearance, extends well toward the scalp. Age-grayness seems not to be characteristic; the most aged matrons known have no more than a few inconspicuous and scattered gray hairs, though the pelage of some is slightly bleached or faded. None of the warriors at Costa Rica showed the slightest grayness except 142 [302] 142 145

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

142 Mashém (aged about 50 years), who had a few gray strands about the
145 temples; but it may be significant that the hair of the tribal outlaw Kolusio, who has lived with white men for full three score years, is iron-gray. Kolusio's pelage is trimmed in Caucasian fashion; that of Mashém
[115] is cut off mid-length in a manner exciting comment, if not derision, on the part of his fellows and others, and resulting in his (Spanish)
[301] sobriquet, Pelado (literally, Peeled, or idiomatically, Shorn); but with few exceptions the hair is kept long as it can be made to grow, and receives careful attention to this end. Naturally the length is somewhat variable; in many cases it depends to or slightly below the waist, while in other cases it merely sweeps the shoulders; and in general it appears to increase in both length and luxuriance not only throughout adolescence, but up to late maturity, for the best pelages are presented by moderately aged persons, while none of the youths are so luxuriantly tressed as their elders. Not the slightest trace of baldness appears. The infantile pelage is short, brownish in color, soft or even silky, and inclined to curl toward the tips. It is not until the age of several months that the hair begins to acquire the adult character, and at least some children retain traces of the infantile pilary character up to 5 or even 10 years; and none of the children display such jet-black shock-heads as are frequently found among other tribes, whose adult pelage may nevertheless be much less luxuriant than that of the Seri. On the whole, it may be said that the Seri hair is luxuriant and vigorous beyond the aboriginal average, and that it, like various other somatic features, indicates a relatively late maturation in the life-history of the individual.

Both sexes are beardless. The female faces seen were entirely free of
142 strong pilary growth; one or two of the warrior faces showed scattering hairs, and Mashém sported a feeble and downy but jet-black mustache with an exceptional number of scattered hairs about the chin; while Kolusio shaved regularly, and might, apparently, have grown moderately stiff but straggling mustaches and beard. Axillary hair seems to be wanting; pubic hair is said to be scanty; otherwise the bodies are practically hairless (more nearly so than those of average Caucasians).

The teeth are solid, close-set, and even, and impress the observer as large; they close with the upper incisors projecting slightly beyond the lower denture in the usual manner.

128 The skeletal characteristics of the Seri are known only from a single
141 specimen obtained in the course of the 1895 expedition in such manner as to establish the identification beyond shadow of question. This skeleton was submitted to Dr Aleš Hrdlička for measurement and discussion.[1]

In making his examination, Dr Hrdlička compared the unquestion-

[1] A separate cranium was obtained by the 1895 expedition, having been sought and picked up by a Mexican member of the party in vindication of his account of the killing of one of the Seri; but, in view of the possibility of erroneous identification, this skull was not submitted in connection with

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

Résumé of the Peculiarities of the Skeleton

The nerve and blood-vessel foramina are generally large. This character and the platycnemic tibiæ indicate an ample musculature of the subject. 141

The height is above the general average for a woman, which, according to Topinard, is 1.55.

The petro-basilar fissures are large and visibly pervious. This condition is found occasionally; significance doubtful; it is more frequent in young subjects.

Platycnemic tibiæ—This is considered a simian character.[1] It was found first by Broca in 1868[2] on bones from Eyzies; it is associated with relative strength of the muscles of the leg; is very frequent among the characters found on bones from the epoch of polished stone in Europe.[3] J. Wyman found this character more accentuated than at Cro-Magnon or at Gibraltar on a third of the tibiæ from the mounds of the United States.[4]

Perforated humerus—Noticed first by Dumoulins, 1826, on the humeri of Guanches and Hottentots;[5] occurs with greatest frequency in the following peoples:[6]

	Per cent.
156 neolithic humeri from around Paris	21.8
97 humeri of African negroes	21.7
122 humeri of Guanches	25.6
80 humeri from the mounds of United States (J. Wyman)	31.2
32 humeri of Polynesians	34.3
30 humeri of altaic and American races	36.2

Summarily, Dr Hrdlička's special determinations conform with the external observations on the Seri body; they indicate an exceptionally large stature, together with a notably well-developed and well-proportioned osseous framework, of the native American type, yet significantly approaching the Caucasian in several respects. It is especially noteworthy that the cranium is well formed and capacious, the precise measurements corroborating the external observation that the Seri head is of good absolute size, though relatively smaller (in comparison with height and weight) than that of some neighboring tribes of less stature—e. g., the Papago. It may be noted, too, that the imperfect ankylosis of the epiphyses, and various other skeletal features, are in accord with the inferences from the living body as to the slowness of attaining maturity. It may be noted further that the extraordinary development of the muscular attachments, especially in the masculine cranium, is quite in harmony with the habits of the tribe. 141 142 [145] [147]

The remaining somatic characteristics of the Seri are for the greater part of such sort as to be described by generalities and negatives. In general they correspond with those of typical American tribesmen and other peoples; and they do not exhibit striking peculiarities in proportion or structure. In the opposability of the thumb, the nonopposability of the hallux, and the independence of fingers and toes, the Seri hands and feet are developed quite up to, if not somewhat beyond, the 142 144

[1] Hovelacque et Hervé, Précis d'Anthropologie, 1907, pp. 112, 2027.
[2] Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie, 1868.
[3] Hovelacque et Hervé, op. cit., p. 112.
[4] Histoire Naturelle des Races Humaines, 1870, p. 304.
[5] Hovelacque et Hervé, op. cit., p. 291.

157 The women are virtuous and faithful and perform all the duties of
152 wife and mother and bear their share of hardships. The hard life,
[145] exposure and struggle for existence soon causes hard features, wrinkles
[165] and ugliness. Many babies die young and the tribe probably numbers
[167] only about two hundred.

The dancing by the driftwood fires continued as we turned in to
123 rest, our eyes constantly drawn to the flame and the glittering eyes in the wild dark faces, while the waves of the sea accompanied the chanting in that mysterious isle of Seriland.

225
133

Seris - off to the fishing grounds - December 1934.
Alcatraz Island in distance.

222 In Seriland most of the food comes from the sea. During April and May, at the time of my first visit, a green grass growing on the sea bottom was detached and washed ashore. The women dragged it up on the bank near camp and spread it out to dry. Some of the stalks contained about seven fine green seeds the size of a pin head. When dry, the
[285] women threshed them out with sticks on a piece of canvas. These are cleaned by the deft use of the *batea*, or winnowing basket, of which these people are pastmasters.

252 A pint of these fine seeds were parched in an olla over coals of driftwood and constantly stirred to prevent burning. It was then ground
262 on a flat rock like a *metate*---any flat rock---into a green meal which was very nourishing. This was cooked in an olla with turtle oil, making a porridge like thick green paint. It was then drunk or eaten with the fingers. If there is plenty, two fingers are used; if not, only one finger.